THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART ACQUIRES SIX WORKS FROM VON HIRSCH COLLECTION

The Cleveland Museum of Art has purchased six rare and important works of art from the Robert von Hirsch collection recently sold at auction by Sotheby's in London. The works are: a Rembrandt drawing of Shah Jahan; a sheet of study drawings by Raphael; a South Italian Romanesque ivory carving of the journey to Bethlehem, circa 1100 A.D.; three ivory panels from a French Gothic casket, first half of the fourteenth century; a North Italian verre fixé glass plaque of the Crucifixion, fifteenth century; and a Florentine silk needlework and metal thread altar frontal frieze, second half of the fourteenth century.

The drawing of Shah Jahan, pen and dark brown ink and wash on Japanese paper washed pale brown, is one of 21 copies done by Rembrandt between 1654 and 1656 of Indian miniatures of the Mogul school. Shah Jahan was the fifth of the great Mogul Emperors of India. He ruled from 1627 until 1658 and was the builder of the Taj Mahal. Commenting on the drawing Sherman E. Lee, director of The Cleveland Museum of Art said, "It is a great drawing, truly beautiful, and an extremely important acquisition for us when combined with our three other Rembrandt drawings. It is also of great importance for us because of our strong collection of Mogul paintings. It gives us a chance to see how a great Western master interpreted the fine Indian paintings that were contemporary with his own work." The drawing is 8-7/8 inches high by 6-3/4 inches wide.

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The ivory carving of the journey to Bethlehem shows the Virgin on the back of a donkey in the foreground. To the right is a servant with stick and bundle over his right shoulder, and on the left Joseph has his left hand placed on the donkey's hindquarters. An architectural motif or screen with horseshoe arches on paired columns, small turrets at the top, and rosettes between the arches is in the background. The plaque is in fine condition and is 6-1/2 inches high by 4-1/2 inches wide.

The French Gothic ivory panels are each divided into four compartments and carved in low relief with scenes from the Medieval romances. The lid has a tournament between two knights on caparisoned horses, flanked by the depictions of the Flight of the Lovers and the Storming of the Castle of Love. The front shows the Fountain of Youth, the Unicorn Hunt and lovers in a tower-shaped howdah on the back of an elephant. The lovers are using a rose to tilt with the God of Love, who advances towards them with bow drawn and a rose tipped arrow notched. On the back panel are depicted Sir Galahad and the Old Man, Gawain and the Lion, and Sir Lancelot and the Sword Bridge. The lid is 5-1/8 inches high by 10-3/8 inches wide. Both the front and back panels are 3-1/2 inches high by 10-1/4 inches wide.

The verre fixé (reverse painted and gilded) stained glass plaque shows the Crucifixion with a standing Virgin and St. John and a kneeling monk and Mary Magdalen at the foot of the cross. Black letter inscribed scrolls sweep up and around the heads of the Virgin and St. John, and Christ is flanked by flying angels. The scene is surmounted by a pointed and cusped Gothic arch that encloses a pelican resting atop the cross and surrounded by leafy foliage and minute flowers. It is 7-1/8 inches high by 3-1/4 inches wide.

The 4-11/16 inches high by 6 inches wide sheet of Raphael studies includes a seated female nude, three depictions of the infant Christ lying down, and a

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child's head. It is a silver-point on pink prepared paper and was drawn around 1508. Raphael (Italian, 1483-1520) was the youngest of the three great masters of the High Renaissance, 31 years the junior of Leonardo da Vinci and seven years younger than Michelangelo. He died at the age of 37 at the height of his creative powers. This drawing is the first work by Raphael to enter the Museum's collections.

Woven with five scenes from the life of Christ, the silk needlework was originally part of a larger frieze including scenes from the life of the Virgin. The five scenes that make up the 6-1/2 inches high by 48 inches wide embroidery depict the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, and Christ Teaching in the Temple.

Robert von Hirsch (1883-1977) was a connoisseur and collector who bought his first painting in 1907, Le Rousse au Caraco blanc by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. His second purchase was Scene de Rue by Pablo Picasso. The discriminating eye he demonstrated in those early acquisitions never left him throughout 70 years of collecting. The art historian Bernard Berenson said von Hirsch was one of only a handful of collectors he had met who really knew about the objects they owned. A German-Jewish leather merchant, von Hirsch left Germany for Switzerland in 1933, never to return. He was able to take his collection with him and settled in Basel, where he continued to add to it. Its great strengths were in Medieval objects and old master drawings.

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